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BOOK TWO

J.N. Williamson's

Masques



An Anthology of Elegant Evil

Paul Dale Anderson • Mort Castle • Olivia De Berardinis • Mark Evans
Daerick Gross • Stephen King • Jose Pimentel • Matt Thompson



Elegant Evil...

"Better Than One"
by PAUL DALE ANDERSON

"If You Take My Hand, My Son"
by MORT CASTLE

"Popsy"
by STEPHEN KING

Welcome to the second volume of
J.N. Williamson's MASQUES, a startling new anthology of
Elegant Evil, based on and expanding from the four-volume
award-winning *Masques* anthology series.

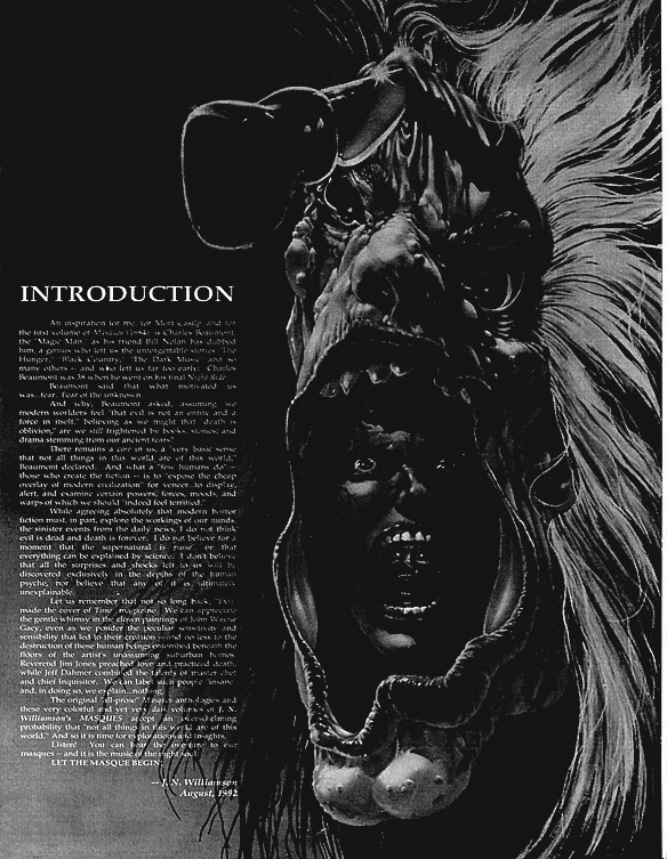
Welcome to the *cutting edge* of visual horror.

Innovation Books
ISBN #1-56521-014-X
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\$4.95 (U.S.A.) \$5.95 (CAN.)
ILLUSTRATED FICTION/HORROR







INTRODUCTION

An inspiration for me, for Matt Casely, and for the first volume of *Masques* (1984), is Charles Beaumont, the "Magic Man," as his friend Bill Nolan has dubbed him, a genius who left us the unforgettable stories "The Hunger," "Black Country," "The Dark Man," and so many others — and who left us far too early. Charles Beaumont was 38 when he went on his final *Night Rider*.

Beaumont said that what motivated us was fear. Fear of the unknown.

And why, Beaumont asked, assuming we modern worlders feel that evil is not an entity and a force in itself, believing as we might that death is oblivion, are we still frightened by books, stories and drama stemming from our ancient fears?

There remains a core in us, a "very basic sense that not all things in this world are of this world," Beaumont declared. And what a "few humans do" — those who create the fiction — is to "expose the cheap overlay of modern civilization" for vengeful display, alert, and examine certain powers, forces, moods, and warps of which we should indeed feel horrified.

While agreeing absolutely that modern horror fiction must, in part, explore the workings of our minds, the sinister events from the daily news, I do not think evil is dead and death is forever. I do not believe for a moment that the supernatural is *false*, or that everything can be explained by science. I don't believe that all the surprises and shocks left to us will be discovered exclusively in the depths of the human psyche, nor believe that any of it is ultimately unexplainable.

Let us remember that not so long back, 1951, made the cover of *Time* magazine. We can appreciate the gentle whimsy in the elegant paintings of John Braxator Gacy, even as we ponder the peculiar sensitivity and sensibility that led to their creation — and no less to the destruction of those human beings entombed beneath the floors of the artist's unassuming suburban homes. Reverend Jim Jones preached love and practiced death, while Jeff Dahmer combed the talents of master chef and chief inquisitor. We can label such people "insane" and, in doing so, we explain nothing.

The original "all-prose" *Masques* anthologies and these very colorful and yet very dark volumes of E. N. Williamson's *MASQUES* accept an overwhelming probability that "not all things in this world are of this world." And so it is time for explanations and insights.

Listen. You can hear the entrance to our masques — and it is the music of the night soul.

LET THE MASQUE BEGIN.

— E. N. Williamson
August, 1992

J.N. Williamson's Masques™

INTRODUCTION TO "BETTER THAN ONE" Page 3

Masques?

Masks?

Paul Dale Anderson had had such bylines as Gustav Karl, Paul Andrews, A.A. Pavlov and, on a few occasions, has been mistaken for science-fiction writer Poul Anderson. Pseudonyms (Anderson sometimes calls them "pseudopods") aside, Paul Dale Anderson is a teacher, copywriter, poet, writer, editor, and formerly military journalist.

His novels include *Claw Hammer* and *Daddy's Home*, and two of the titles of his two short story collections show he has found an answer for the riddle of Wickedness: *The Devil Made Me Do It* (1985) and *The Devil Made Me Do It Again* (1988).

Whether calling himself "Paul Dale" or "Moe Zambique," modest Mr. Anderson writes stories with startlingly original twists and dazzling finishes.

Here's one of them.

-- J.N. Williamson & Mort Castle

INTRODUCTION TO "IF YOU TAKE MY HAND, MY SON" Page 10

Mort Castle is one of the best writers of horror we have with us.

Read his novels, *Cursed Be The Child* and *The Strangers*, or his short and not-so-short stories in such magazines as *Twilight Zone*, *Pulphouse*, *Dark Regions*; and the anthologies *Lovecraft's Legacy*, *Still Dead*; and, of course, all four *Masques* volumes.

Is anyone doing better characterization?

Who?

-- J.N. Williamson

Jerry Williamson wrote the above. I saw his comments at a time in my life and my career when I needed to. No quips or one-liners.

Just my assurance to Jerry that I have tried and plan to keep on trying to get it *right* and to put it out there into the fifth dimension.

And my thanks.

Jerry, when have you not been there for me?

-- Mort Castle

INTRODUCTION TO "POPSY" Page 27

Stephen King is tall, has a tendency to squint, and is remarkable for both his talent and his industry.

He writes stories, books, screenplays -- and other stuff.

Bet you knew that already, didn't you?

Revlo Spivaack, of East Hogclinch, Kentucky, has not read a single word Steve King has written. You can find Mr. Spivaack in *The Guinness Book of World Records* under the listing "Clubs With Only A Single Member."

-- J.N. Williamson & Mort Castle

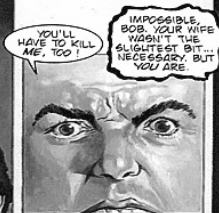
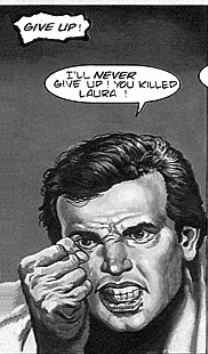
J.N. Williamson's MASQUES™, Volume 1, No. 2. First printing: September 1992. ISBN #1-56521-013-1. Published by Innovation Books, a division of the Innovative Corporation, 3622 Jacob Street, Wheeling, WV 26003, (304) 232-7701. Fax #304-232-4010. David Campiti, Managing Editor. George Broderick, Jr., Art Direction. Vincent Donley, Finance & Administration. John Newton, Production. Book Design by David Campiti and John Newton. Licensing and story adaptations arranged by Mort Castle, Editorial Director. MASQUES is TM J.N. Williamson. INNOVATION logo is TM Innovative Corp. Front cover painting © 1992 Olivia De Berardinis. Introduction page artwork by Daerick Gross, and © 1992 Concorde/New Horizons, Inc. "Better Than One" © 1992 Paul Dale Anderson. "If You Take My Hand, My Son" © 1992 Mort Castle. "Popsy" © 1992 Stephen King. Adaptations and art © 1992 Innovative Corp. Introductions and Editorials © 1992 J.N. Williamson and Mort Castle. All rights reserved. Special thanks to John McClay. *It's an Innovation Publication!*

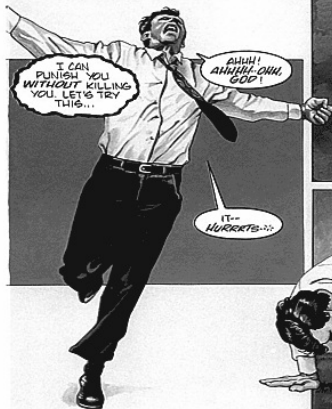
BETTER THAN ONE

STORY & SCRIPT:
PAUL DALE ANDERSON

ART:
PIMENTEL

LETTERING:
VICKIE WILLIAMS





"BUT HOW DID YOU LEARN...?"



"BOOKS AND MAGAZINES, THINGS YOU'VE READ OVER THE YEARS AND DON'T REMEMBER."

"BUT I REMEMBER, BOB!"

"I REMEMBER EVERYTHING!"



"IT'S ALL THERE, ALL THE SENSORY INPUT, STORED IN BILLIONS OF CHEMICAL RECEPTORS IN A PART OF THE BRAIN YOU DON'T NORMALLY USE."



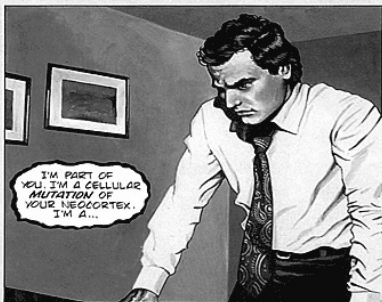
"THE PART OF THE BRAIN I NOW OCCUPY!"

BUT WHAT ARE YOU? WHO ARE YOU?

YOU'RE NOT ME. I KNOW THAT.



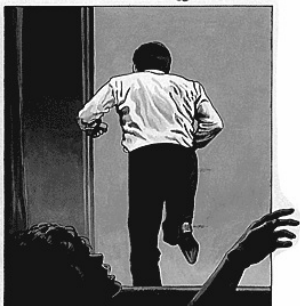
YOU ARE NOT ME!



I'M PART OF YOU. I'M A CELLULAR MUTATION OF YOUR NEOCORTEX. I'M A...

CANCER!







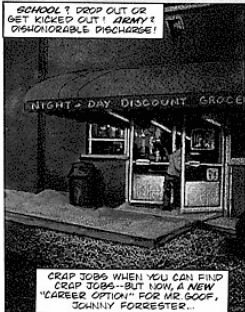


IF REAL-LIFE HAD A PROLOGUE, THIS WOULD BE HIS. JOHNNY FORRESTER WOULD CALL IT... "PROLOGUE TO THE ULTIMATE GOOF."



AND HE HAD NEVER MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO HUFF IT OR FLUB IT OR BLOW IT TOTALLY!

SCHOOL? DROP OUT OR GET KICKED OUT! ARMY? DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE!



CRAP JOBS WHEN YOU CAN FIND CRAP JOBS - BUT NOW, A NEW "CAREER OPTION" FOR MR. GOOF, JOHNNY FORRESTER...

THERE'S A GUN IN MY POCKET.

A GUN? I GOT A FINGER! GUNS COST MONEY!



I WANT EVERYTHING IN THE REGISTER!

NO! I AM NOW CITI-ZEN! YOU ARE NOT STEALING FROM CITI-ZEN!

YOU GETTING JOBS GOOD-FOR- NOTHING BUM!





HERE IS
POLICEMEN
PROTECTING GOOD
AMERICAN CITI-
ZEN!

HE IS
MAKING THE
ROBBERY!

HE
IS HAVING
GUN!



OH,
HELL...

COPS JUST GOT
OFF DUTY. I
HEARD THEM
TALKING ABOUT
IT... LATER.
THEY CAME IN--



--TO BUY LOTTERY TICKETS!
THEY WERE FEELING LUCKY!

FREEZE
JERK! NOT A
TWITCH!



I...I!
NO!

MY INDEX FINGER GETS
TANGLED UP IN THE
JACKET'S LINING!

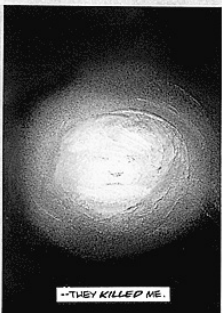


KA-BLAMM!
KA-BLAMM!

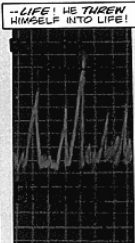


WHAT THEY
DID WAS--

KA-BLAMM!
KA-BLAMM!



--THEY KILLED ME.





PLEASE, CAN'T YOU GIVE HIM SOMETHING MORE FOR THE PAIN?

I EXPLAINED THAT BEFORE ANYTHING STRONGER MIGHT KILL HIM.

BESIDES, HE'S NOT IN SEVERE PAIN. NOT REALLY.



HE'S ONLY CONSCIOUS FOR A MOMENT, NOW AND THEN. THE SOUNDS HE MAKES...

THE MOANS.

MAYBE HE'S DREAMING, I CAN'T SAY, BUT HE'S NOT SUFFERING.



RIGHT, DOCTOR JERK--
HAVING A TRIPLE SCOOP
OF GODDAMNED GIGGLES IS
WHAT I'M DOING!



DOCTOR,
WILL HE...?

WILL HE
LIVE...?



HE'S STILL
CRITICAL, BUT HIS
CONDITION SEEMS
STABLE.

HE'S GOT
A CHANCE.



A CHANCE?
RIGHT!!

MY LIFE'S
JUST BEEN ONE 24 KARAT
GOLD CHANCE AFTER
ANOTHER!





THE OLD MAN TRIED.
FOR A WHILE.

HE WORKED STEADY.
BROUGHT HIS PAY HOME.

IT WAS JUST LIKE WE WERE
A REAL FAMILY. JUST LIKE
HE WAS A FATHER.

WE WENT TO THE ZOO IN ST. LOUIS,
ONCE. WE WENT TO A DRIVE-IN
MOVIE. WE PLAYED CHECKERS.

HE NEVER JUST LET
ME WIN. SO WHEN THE
TIME CAME I DID WIN,
I REALLY WON.

I REMEMBER THAT. NOT THAT MANY
TIMES I'VE BEEN A WINNER, SO I
REMEMBER THAT--

--AND I REMEMBER STARTING TO
TRUST HIM, TO BELIEVE HIM...

I'LL
BE THERE,
SON.

THE WEBELOS
CEREMONY--

...AN IMPORTANT
STAGE IN YOUR SCOUTING
CAREER AND AN IMPORTANT
STAGE IN YOUR JOURNEY TO
BECOME A MAN...

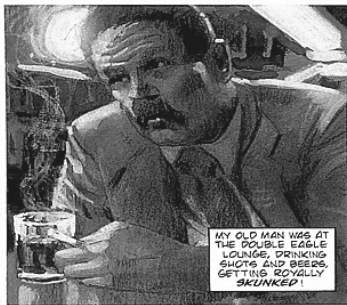
--AND IT WAS IMPORTANT.
IT MATTERED IN A WAY
YOU CAN'T EVEN SAY.

CHARLEY HAWSER'S FATHER WAS THERE.
MIKE PETTYFIELD'S FATHER WAS THERE.
CLINT HAYNORTH'S FATHER WAS THERE--

--AND CLINT'S FATHER WAS EVEN
IN A WHEELCHAIR 'CAUSE HE
WAS ALL PARALYZED!

AND MY
OLD MAN?

SURPRISE! EVERYTHING
THAT HAPPENS IS A SURPRISE
IF YOU'RE A DAMNED FOOL!



MY OLD MAN WAS AT
THE DOUBLE EAGLE
LOUNGE, DRINKING
SHOTS AND BEERS,
GETTING ROYALLY
SKUNKED!

WE CAME IN AFTER TWO
O'CLOCK. I WAS WAITING.



YOU LIED TO ME!
YOU TOLD ME YOU WOULD
BE THERE!

YOU
LIED!



WELL,
I'LL TELL YOU
IT'S THIS
WAY.



GUESS I AM JUST
A GODDAMNED LIAR IS
WHAT IT IS!

THEN THE OLD MAN LAUGHED!
AND WE MUSSED UP MY HAIR!



HOW
COULD YOU
EVER FORGIVE
HIM FOR THAT?



JOHNNY,
DON'T YOU DIE,
OKAY?

YOU DIE, AND IT'S
GONE. THERE WON'T
BE ANY MORE US.



JOHNNY...

...JOHN-NY...

...JOHN-NY...



I LOVE NANCY.
SHE IS THE ONLY
THING KIND AND
GOOD AND GENTLE
IN MY LIFE.

0000
I LOVE HER
AND I WANT TO
TELL HER...



UH...
UNGH...
UH...:

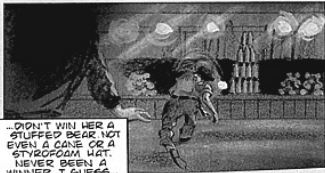
HE HURT, WAS ALL HURT,
AND ONLY HURT. HURT
BARELY CONTAINED BY
FLESH, AND THE HURT
SPOKE WHAT IT CHOSE
AND ONLY THAT--



--WE WENT INTO MEMORY,
FOUND A PLACE WHERE
THERE WAS NO HURT.



NANCY ALWAYS
FELT WARM AND
SOFT. ALWAYS...

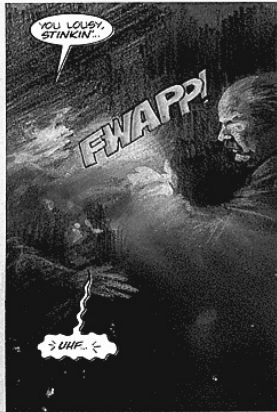


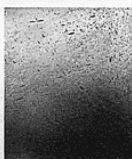
...DIDN'T WIN HER A
STUFFED BEAR NOT
EVEN A CANE OR A
STYROFOAM HAT.
NEVER BEEN A
WINNER, I GUESS...



...EXCEPT WITH
NANCY...

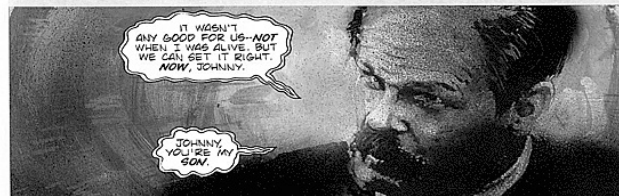
...DREW HER PICTURE FOR
VALENTINE'S DAY.
DIDN'T GET IT REALLY
GOOD. WANT TO DRAW
NANCY JUST RIGHT...
SOMEDAY...

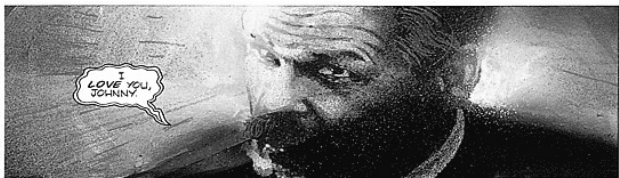


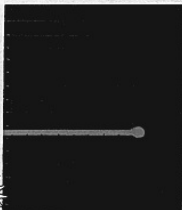












HE WAS NOT AFRAID

HE TOOK THE OLD MAN'S HAND

HE DIED



HE DIED.

AND HE WENT TO HELL!

AND HE SCREAMED IN AGONY AS THE MARROW
OF HIS BONES BOILED (THOUGH HE HAD NO
BONES, THOUGH HE HAD NO BODY)

AND HE SCREAMED AS RAZORS SLIT HIS
EYEBALLS AND CORKSCREWS TWISTED
INTO HIS BRAIN (THOUGH HE HAD NO
EYES, NO BRAIN, THOUGH HE HAD NO BODY)

AND HE SCREAMED AND HIS VOICE WAS A
LOST VOICE IN THE BILLIONS AND BILLIONS
OF VOICES OF THE CACOPHONOUS
CHORUS OF THE DAMNED

AND HE SCREAMED--

YOU LIED
TO ME! YOU
LIED!

GUESS I'M JUST
A GODDAMNED LIAR IS
WHAT IT IS!

END

COUSINTOWN Shopping Center

SHERIDAN, CRUISING.
JUST AFTER THE
SUN HAS GONE DOWN.

SHERIDAN, IN A
JAM AND
ONLY ONE WAY
TO BAIL.

okay!

HE FEELS A
SMALL WAVE
OF SELF-
DISGUST,
BUT IT'S
GETTING LESS
AND LESS--

--EVERY TIME HE
TAKES A CHILD.

YOU
GET SEPARATED
FROM YOUR DAD,
SON?

POPSY

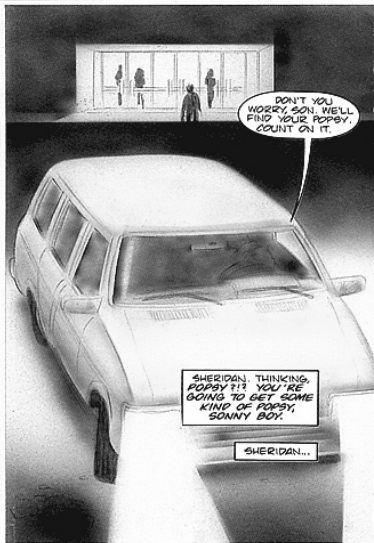
STORY BY STEPHEN KING
SCRIPT BY MARK VALADEZ
ART BY MATT THOMPSON
CALLIGRAPHY BY VICKIE WILLIAMS
EDITING BY MORT CASTLE



POPSY? THAT'S WHAT YOU CALL A GRANDFATHER, SHERIDAN FIGURES. PUSH COMES TO RUN, SHERIDAN CAN GET AWAY FROM A GERIATRIC ANY DAY!









HIS PROBLEM WAS CARDS...ANY
KIND OF CARDS, AS LONG AS IT
WAS THE KIND WHERE YOU
STARTED OFF CHANGING YOUR
GREENBACKS INTO CHIPS.



\$12,000 LATER...

I'LL PAY, LISTEN,
MR. REGGIE, IT'S NO PROBLEM.
COUPLE OF DAYS, A WEEK...



YOU'RE IN
WAY OVER YOUR
HEAD, SHERIDAN,
BUT I'LL TELL
YOU WHAT...



GO SEE THIS GUY.
MAYBE YOU CAN DO SOME
WORK FOR HIM AND PAY ME
OFF. YOU'LL PROBABLY
GET ALONG.

SNIK



HE'S A
CREEP LIKE
YOU.

HE CALLS
HIMSELF...

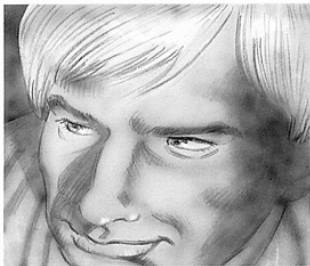
WE'RE STOPPING 'CAUSE, IN
A WAY, YOU CAN SAY
SHERIDAN IS A BOY SCOUT.



I FORGOT TO
PUT MY GLASSES ON.
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO
DRIVE AT NIGHT WITH-
OUT GLASSES.

IN THE GLASSES
CASE ON THE FLOOR OVER
THERE, THEY SLID OVER TO
YOUR SIDE. HAND 'EM TO
ME, WOULD YOU?

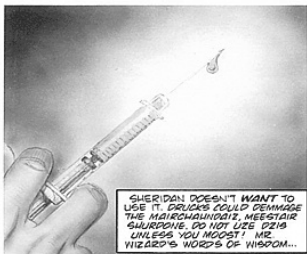
AND A BOY SCOUT'S
MOTTO IS...
BE PREPARED!!!













...BET HE FLIES
EVEN BETTER AFTER A
COUPLE BOTTLES OF NIGHT
TRAIN.

SHERIDAN. READY TO BE OVER
AND DONE WITH THIS LITTLE
FREAKY. A TURN HERE ON
BOONDOCK ROAD, THEN UP AHEAD..

ETA. ANOTHER TEN MINUTES,
AND THEN IT'S TIME FOR
WEIRDO WAIT TO "GOO ON
A BOWT. ROAD"!

I
WANT MY
POPSY!

I
WANT MY
POPSY!

SHUT UP!
SHUT IT UP!

NOW!

FLAARF-FLAARF

OR YOU GET
THE NEEDLE AND
THAT'S IT!

AND YOU WON'T EVER
SEE POPSY
AGAIN!

MY
POPSY'S ON
THE WAY.

FLAARF-FLAARF

FLAARF-FLAARF



SHERIDAN, THINKING.
MIND CLICKING
ALONG LIKE HE'S
ON SPEED.

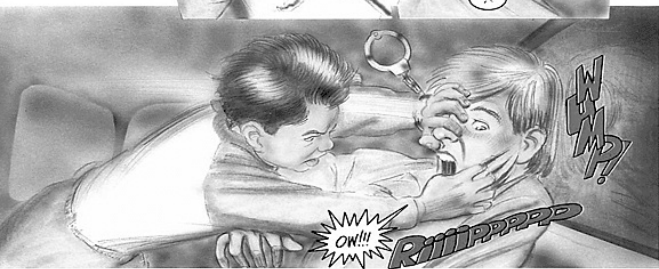


I TOLD HIM I WAS THIRSTY. HE'LL FIND ME.
HE CAN SMELL ME. THIRSTY I TOLD HIM I
WAS THIRSTY. HE WENT TO GET ME SOME-
THING TO DRINK HE WENT TO GET ME
SOMEONE TO DRINK HE WENT...









KRAAASHHKK!



AH! AH!
AH! AH!

SHERIDAN, LOSING IT.
SHERIDAN, ALL THE
WAY OVER THE TOP.



WOOO!
WAAA-WOOO...
AW-WOOO!



HE WAS
MEAN TO ME,
POPSY.



CRRU-RRASSYKK

SHERIDAN, SO CRAZY WITH FEAR AND IMPOSSIBILITY THAT HE IS SEEING EVERYTHING WITH THE COLDEST, MOST RATIONAL LUCIDITY.



THE TIE. IT WAS BLUE.

THE BOY WAS RIGHT.

THE BOY.



WE ONLY CAME TO THE MALL BECAUSE MY GRANDSON WANTED SOME LITTLE TURTLE FIGURES. MICHELANGELO. VAN GOGH...

...I FORGET THE NAMES.



SHERIDAN. SLIPPING AWAY.
HEARING THEM TALK.





"ARE YOU STILL THIRSTY?"
"YES, POPSY! THE BAD MAN
SCARED ME! MY THROAT IS
SO DRY!"



SHERIDAN, REMEMBERING... CUPPING HIS
HANDS FOR A DRINK FROM THE BACK-
YARD FAUCET ON A HOT SUMMER DAY
WHEN HE WAS ... JUST A KID...

SHERIDAN,
EIGHT
DIMMING...

... TO BLACK.



END

J.N. Williamson's Masques™

MUSINGS & MEDITATIONS #2: AN AFTERWORD

Some years ago, a young man at a high school writing conference asked, "Is the 'human condition' a good subject for a story?"

I wasn't being facetious when I answered, "A good subject? It's the *only* subject!"

It's the subject of every story you'll find in *J. N. Williamson's MASQUES*.

"But I thought *MASQUES* stories were *horror* stories."

Right!

"But I thought I could meet some ghosts and ghouls and demons and vampires and maybe a werewolf or two..."

Right again!

How better to examine the aspects of "Ye Olde Human Condition" than to have Ms./Mrs./Miss/Man encounter the awful and awesome (that word used in the classical and not the skateboard generation sense!) the bizarre, the grotesque, the far-out, way-out, and all-out Evil!

Hard to believe, but there are those critics who dismiss as "escape reading" all horror fiction -- and thus horror comics -- even painted and totally class ones like this one!

I don't think so.

If you want escape, spend a buck or two on a lottery ticket, or dial any one of hundreds of "900-Fantasy" numbers, or book yourself two days at Disneyworld.

The stories you'll find in *J. N. Williamson's MASQUES* are all about the "real thing," the "real, real thing," the BIG Question: What does it mean to be a human being?

A human being. That's what you'll find in your mirror, just as I do mine. And with that human being, there are a number of cold and shadowy companions, including at least one Imp of the Perverse, Captain Cruelty, Big Daddy Damnitall-Anyway, Bone Deep Regret, Ms. Mistake and Mr. Despair, and all those ghosts who have not gone with the snows of yesterday.

A human being: That's not always such an easy thing to be, y'know? But consider the alternatives...as you consider the horrors of this volume of *J. N. Williamson's MASQUES*!

-- Mort Castle

CONTRIBUTORS

David Campiti, founder and Managing Editor of Innovation Publishing, has toiled in the comics field since 1982. Although responsible for the design and "look" of *J.N. Williamson's MASQUES*, David is known first and foremost as the author of such diverse comics series as *DARK SHADOWS*, *FORBIDDEN PLANET*, *HERO ALLIANCE*, *LOST IN SPACE*, and *Piers Anthony's ON A PALE HORSE*.

Mark Evans has aged a full two months since his first listing here, for painting "The Crushing Death" in issue #1. A recent graduate of the Pratt Institute, where he studied illustration and painting on a four-year scholarship, Mark's first comics work was for *Clive Barker's Hellraiser*. He is currently painting four issues of Innovation's *DARK SHADOWS* series for 1993 release.

Jose Pimentel, a lover of animals (with his own small zoo!), was born in 1956 in the uplands of Carpina, a small town in Brazil. Beginning as a fabric painter in at the age of 17, he illustrated his first comic-book story in 1979. He had a number of comics stories published between 1982 - 1985, including adult material. He dropped from the comics scene for the next several years, dedicating himself to oil paintings and exhibitions. He has recently returned to comics to paint for Innovation. "Comics are a serious addiction," he says. "Once you're hooked, you can't live long without it." He plans to illustrate an upcoming storyline for *DARK SHADOWS*.

Matt Thompson, a government employee for the state of West Virginia, has long fostered a desire to illustrate an adaptation of *Rebel Without a Cause*, so far without that desire coming to fruition. Matt has, however, illustrated such diverse projects as *HERO ALLIANCE QUARTERLY*, and *LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS*, and has both written and illustrated *HEADMAN* and *LOST IN SPACE*, all for Innovation.

Mark Valadez is a student at Northern Illinois University. Since high school, he has been winning awards for his writing. His stories have appeared in a number of horror comics, and his screenplay of Mort Castle's *The Strangers* has been optioned by O'Gore Productions.